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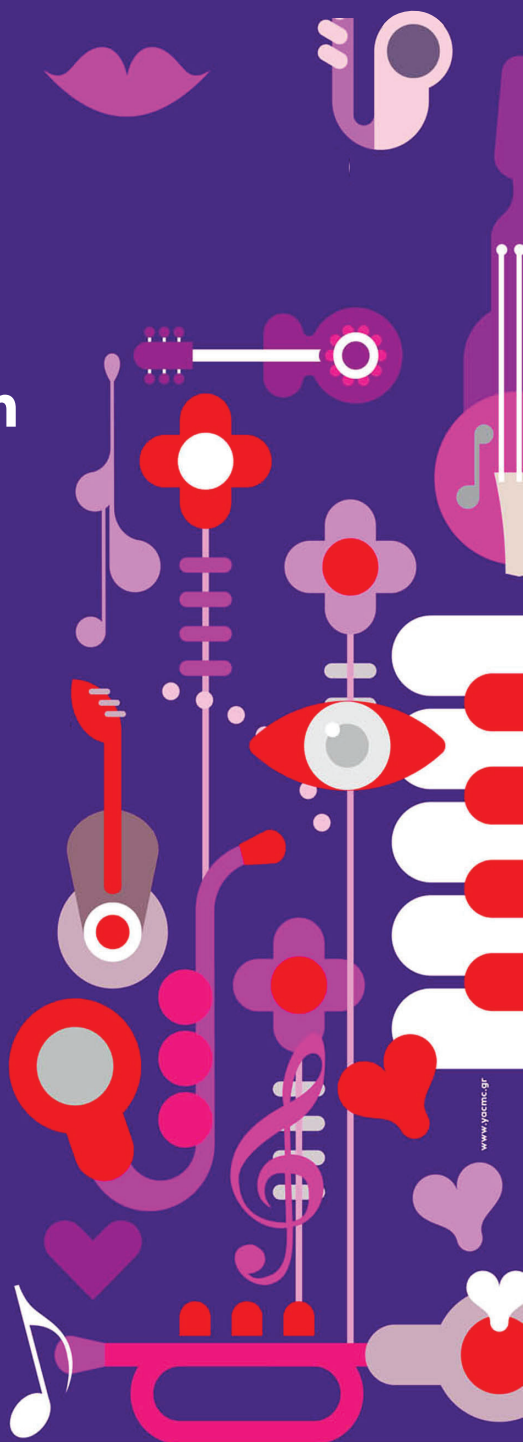
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**Handbook  
of Best Practices:**

# **MUSIC in Creative Detoxification and Rehabilitation**

Edited by  
**Vasileios Stamou  
&  
Lelouda Stamou**

UNIVERSITY OF MACEDONIA



# Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Addiction- Addicted- Rehabilitation:<br>What, how and why?.....  | 1   |
| <i>Theano Th. Chatzoudi</i>  |     |
| Creative music making and its effects on<br>children and youth .....   | 41  |
| <i>Lelouda Stamou, Despoina Zioga, Vasileios Stamou</i>  |     |
| Community music programs and social inclusion.....   | 63  |
| <i>Lelouda Stamou, Despoina Zioga, Vasileios Stamou</i>  |     |
| Music, community and recovery: Good practice<br>in UK community music projects supporting<br>recovery from addiction.....                  | 80  |
| <i>Kathy Ellwand, Molly Mathieson, Dan Blomfield,<br/>Sophie Wilsdon, Nell Hubbard, Isolde Freeth-Hale</i>                                 |     |
| Can music listening facilitate reinstating brain<br>dopaminergic activity in substance-addicted<br>individuals? A theoretical review ..... | 99  |
| <i>Vasileios Stamou, Lelouda Stamou, Pierluigi Graziani</i>  |     |
| Clinical case: Application of Beck's addiction<br>or motivation model to prevent relapse .....   | 142 |
| <i>Pierluigi Graziani, Fabio Cannas Aghedu, Elodie<br/>Charbonnier, Jessica Giuffrida, Jonathan Del Monte</i>                              |     |
| The quality of motivation is a criterion<br>for fitting the treatment .....  | 149 |
| <i>Jonathan Del Monte, Fabio Cannas Aghedu,<br/>Elodie Charbonnier, Jessica Giuffrida, Pierluigi Graziani</i>                              |     |
| The desire to drink: Is it dangerous in the hospital?<br>Application of exposure technique .....   | 159 |
| <i>Pierluigi Graziani, Jessica Giuffrida, Elodie Charbonnier,<br/>Fabio Cannas Aghedu, Jonathan Del Monte</i>                              |     |
| Reflections on art and digital therapy in<br>the treatment of eating disorders .....   | 171 |
| <i>Lucia Romo Alejandra Laszcz, Elisabetta Scanferla,<br/>Isabelle Pouydesseau, Philip Gorwood</i>   |     |

# Community music programs and social inclusion

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People who belong to socially vulnerable groups are deprived of a series of rights that are catholic and undisputed, such as housing, well-being and education. According to a definition of the World Health Organisation (WHO),

*Vulnerability is the degree to which a population, individual or organisation is unable to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impacts of disasters. The European Commission describes vulnerable groups as 'groups that experience a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than the general population'. These groups include ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled people, the homeless, those struggling with substance abuse, the isolated elderly, and children. All of them often face difficulties that can lead to further social exclusion, such as low levels of education and unemployment or underemployment. (European Parliament Think Tank, 2016, p. 2)*

European Union reports that social exclusion and poverty among young people has increased during the economic crisis of the recent years.

([https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy/social-inclusion\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy/social-inclusion_en))

The concept of social inclusion is two-dimensional; practical and psychological-emotional. On the one hand it coincides with the efforts made by organized societies to provide to all people and group-members of theirs, access to basic social goods and rights, such as housing, work, health care, education, political rights and other (Tsiakalos, 1998). On the other hand, it is synonymous with assuring a social context into which the person feels valued and significant, wanted and accepted by the broader group, a context where one feels that he/she belongs to.

## **Music and the arts for social inclusion**

Music education and its positive effects on children's and adults' social development, on the growth of communication and collaboration skills, and the consequent development of feelings of social well-being and social inclusion, has been frequently reported (Stamou, 2015; Welch et al., 2014). According to Fredrikson et al. (2009), children that are very young are mostly interested in musical games and the rituals developed upon music, which shows a natural predisposition for play and musical activities, probably because during the first months of life, the development of their ability to communicate is very much based upon the speech and song offered to them in an immediate manner by the adults who take care of them (Welch, 2005 as reported in Fredrikson et al., 2009; Stamou, 2005; Stamou, 2004; Trainor & Zacharias, 1998; Papousek, 1996).

The adult voice which is directed to the child, along with its melodic repetition and variation, tonal characteristics, and rhythm patterns, combined with an emotional exaggeration in its expression, is what attracts the child's attention and encourages the child to participate and share experiences and actions. The feeling of well-being in these actions is of central importance. Furthermore, in the first years of life, the musical games and music rituals between adults and children are very important tools for developing supporting and healthy social relationships, because they satisfy the existential need of the person to feel that he/she belongs to a broader social group (Dissanayake, 2008; Trevarthen, 2008; Stamou, 2002; Papousek, 1996 as reported in Fredrikson et al., 2009).

Social inclusion is a prerequisite for the person's and society's well-

being (UN General Assembly, 2013), and it is one of the goals of many governments and international organizations today. In this context, music and the arts have often been used as tools for solving social problems and maintaining social balance and cohesion (Coppi, 2017; Welch et al., 2014; Rinta et al., 2011). Arts in general, and music especially, have been found to positively affect human development, as well as possess the power to unite people, contributing to healthy social relationships (Welch et al., 2014; Rinta et al., 2011; Fredrikson et al., 2009). In a research study conducted at a national level in UK, with 1251 young children, 7 to 9 years of age, it was found that children whose music perception and music performance skills are higher, are more likely to describe themselves as “socially included” (Welch et al. 2009). Another research study which took place in the UK and Finland, with 110 children 8 to 11 years of age, found that the more days children practiced their musical instrument or sang with friends or family, the more chances they had to describe themselves as socially included (Rinta et al., 2011).

## **Community music and social inclusion**

According to Veblen (2008), community is an ideal. The last 100 years, the concept of community has attracted the attention of the academia leading to the development of multiple community theories in the social sciences. Hillery's (1955) collection of more than 94 definitions of the term is indicative of the complexity of the issue. More recent conversations on the subject, tend to define ‘community’ as the ‘idea of belonging somewhere” (Amit et al., 2002; Anderson, 1991; Appadurai, 1990).

Veblen (2008) defines ‘community music’ as another phrase for music education which takes place apart from the restrictions and the curricula of specific music studies. He also underlines that its basic characteristic is the production of music, and defines it as ‘making music with people”, something that can take place anywhere and at any time. Higgins (2012) defines community music as an an approach to music making outside of formal teaching and learning situations, where emphasis is put on people's participation, equal opportunities, and multiculturalism. Dialogue and equal opportunities for access to knowledge are underlined as basic values in community music, making it a democratic educational process. Personal and social well-being of all members is also considered signifi-

cant, sometimes even more significant than the educational process itself and the development of music skills and knowledge. Community music teachers emphasize the power of music to bring people together, strengthening their personal and collective identity (Veblen, 2008). The Community Music Activity Commission (CMAC) of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) is serving a continually increasing net of theoreticians and educators of community music for the past 20 years and more.

Community music offers music education without any prerequisites or conditions, without discrimination or required financial resources. Financial issue (tuition) for access to formal music education is often a major concern that constitutes music learning as a privilege of certain social groups. Through community music programs, music is for all people and makes them feel members of a broader group sharing a common goal. In practical terms, the knowledge and skills which are developed by the group members through community music making, diminishes their exclusion from learning, and encourages them to not feel isolated. In a research study that took place in the UK (Warwick et al., 2006), 533 young people reported music as the third highest source of hope after family and friends. It was placed higher than religion or sports.

Teaching the arts to young people is considered crucial for their social development, because it encourages their interest and empathy for other people, their political and philosophical thought, their self-control, independence and self-confidence for succeeding future goals (Heath & Smyth, 1999). The role of music in social inclusion is important, since it has the power to overcome social, ethnic, religious, language or racial differences (Bamford, 2006; Burnard et al., 2008). More recent research studies have also shown improvement in community music participants' academic interest and achievement, increased sense of inclusion and respect for the others (Odena, 2014; Portowitz et al., 2009).

### **Community music programs for socially vulnerable families**

Special attention has been given by researchers to socially vulnerable groups which either live excluded from the broader community, or are at-risk of social exclusion, due to their particular characteristics. Such groups include people with low educational and socio-economic level,

minorities, drug addicts, immigrants and refugees. Many music/art educational programs have been designed and implemented aiming at social inclusion of children and parents who belong to socially vulnerable groups. Some of these programs have been funded by governmental or state organizations and have been implemented for a long period of time, while others were smaller in size and were implemented for much shorter periods. In many of these programs, the target group was parents of very young children from socially vulnerable groups, to also act preventively for childrens' personal and social growth.

### **The “Sing & Grow” Program**

The “Sing & Grow” is a music therapy program of early intervention and prevention (Abad & Williams, 2007). It was created in 2001 in Australia, and has grown extensively serving approximately 2000 families per year. It targets families with children 0-3 years old, who are at high-risk of social exclusion due to educational, socio-economic and other characteristics (Sing & Grow Fact Sheet, at <http://singandgrow.org/singgrow-video/>). Such characteristics are low educational level, poverty, unemployment, divorces, single parent families, the young age of parents (parents younger than 20 years old), psychopathology of parents, confrontation and violence in the family, parents' criminal record, drug addiction and others.

Through the participation of parents and children in music activities and interactive games with singing, dancing and musical instruments, the program aims at minimizing the negative effects of family conditions on children's psychological, spiritual, emotional and social development, and consequently at increasing the benefits for the young children. More specific goals of the program are to strengthen the connection between parents and children, and to increase parental skills for bonding and responding to their children's emotional and developmental needs. The program puts great emphasis on the importance of family bonding and the quality of relationships between parents and children younger than 3 years old for children's personal and social growth (Abad & Williams, 2007). The program provides support and consulting to the families even after its completion, concerning the use of music at home and the participation in similar music education programs.

The program is being evaluated by an independent external research



group (Sing & Grow Fact Sheet). Families are invited to voluntarily participate in the evaluation by completing a form on the first and final week of the program. Collaborative organizations are also invited to submit an evaluation report concerning family supervision after the completion of the program. Furthermore, best practices are being recorded through action research studies, and exchange of information and experiences is taking place in trainer-staff conferences. Publications are also coming out on the program describing the research studies as well as the experiences of people participating in the program. Findings from the evaluation process of the program since the beginning of its implementation in 2006, showed, among others, decrease in violent parental behavior and depression symptoms, and increase in parental involvement and activity with children at home, and development of children's skills for communication and group playing (Abad & Williams, 2007).

### **The El Sistema Programs**

Another case of a music education program aiming at social inclusion of vulnerable groups and also at prevention, is the El Sistema and the El Sistema – inspired programs. The El Sistema, with the original title being “Social Action for Music” was created in 1975 in Venezuela by Jose Antonio Abreu and in a period of 40 years, it expanded to the whole world. The program started with 11 children in a parking place and today there are 277 Sistema and Sistema-style programs in 58 countries serving more than 800,000 children all over the world (Coppi, 2017; Welch et al., 2014; Eichler, 2010). The aim of these programs are not to produce professional musicians, but rather to save children from poverty, crime and juvenile delinquency. Research studies (Eichler, 2010) have shown that 70% of the students attending these programs come from families who live in poverty.

The Sistema programs target children and families who are socially excluded due to poverty, discrimination and other types of educational and socioeconomic disadvantages. The programs aim at children's social inclusion as well as prevention of exclusion. Participation is free of charge for all children, but it requires the children's and family's commitment for completing the program (Tunstall & Booth, 2016).

Attending the program includes from the very beginning, intensive

participation in orchestral and choir groups and intensive group teaching. Children can enter the program from the age of 2 – 3 years old, when they actually practice rhythm and body expression. At the age of 5, children hold their first music instrument, starting with flute and the drums. They also join the choir in order to cultivate group spirit through practicing as a music group. Until the age of 7, all children choose their first string or wind instrument. The Sistema programs devote much time working with the children's parents. When a child is 2 or 3 years old, teachers visit the child's home in order to make sure that parents realize the degree of commitment required by them. When students start their instrumental music lessons, teachers guide parents in how to support their children's practice at home, by providing feedback and encouragement (Coppi, 2017).

The benefits of participation in the Sistema programs, for children, parents and the broader community, are underlined in 85 research studies which have been conducted in 44 Sistema centers from 19 countries over the world (Creech et al., 2014). Findings show that benefits for the children include increased self-esteem, raised expectations and improved emotional well-being, while positive effects are also reported on children's social growth, such as better communication and collaboration skills and interpersonal relationships. Parents were found to provide increased support to their children, and exhibited increased self-esteem, increased sense of self-efficacy in their parental role, increased expectations for their children and significant improvement in inter-family communication. The Sistema programs were also found to positively affect the broader community. Decrease in program drop out, anti-social behavior, criminal action and drug use, and increase in employment were noticed in the communities where Sistema programs were implemented.

### **“Hungry for Music” and “Recycled Orchestra”**

Several other programs to promote social inclusion have been developed the last decades in Europe, U.S.A. and other countries. The program “Hungry for Music” started in 1992, when his director Jeff Campbell organized a street concert in Washington to benefit the homeless people in his area. After three years, a program was created aiming at helping children start in music, offering them musical instruments and music guidance. So far, the program has given more than 11,000 instruments to children and

young people that are threatened by poverty. The instruments are being given to the program by children who play music from 49 states in the US and 25 more other countries. Approximately 500 musical instruments are being gathered and given out on a yearly basis, while music programs are organized to support children in learning the instrument and feeling part of the music community (<https://hungryformusic.org/>).

The “Recycled Orchestra” is an orchestra from Paraguay. Its members use musical instruments constructed by recycled garbage. The program, created in the landfill village of Catura, uses the motto “The world sent us garbage. We send back music”. The origin of the orchestra was a worker in the landfill who had some musical knowledge and started giving lessons to the children while they were waiting for their parents to finish work. Faced with the major problem of not having musical instruments, he decided to construct his first recycled instrument, a violin, from material in the garbage. Gradually more instruments were created. Today, there is an amazing production of musical instruments constructed by recycled material, and the Recycled Orchestra is internationally known, giving concerts all over the world.

(<https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2016/09/14/493794763/from-trash-to-triumph-the-recycled-orchestra>).

### **Programs for minorities**

Music is also used as means for social inclusion in educational programs for minorities. The “Luton Roma Music Project” (LRMP) is a music education program designed and implemented with the co-operation of a community/non-governmental organization, established local community services, and specially trained early childhood music educators (Mathias & Burrell, 2017). The program has been implemented in Luton, UK, where the Roma minority group is one of the most social excluded groups in the area. The aim of the program is to expand the access of Roma people in music, and through this, to improve communication between family members in the Roma community, to create an appropriate context for interaction and collaboration between opponent and mutually excluded Roma groups, and to contribute to the inclusion of Romas in the broader Luton community.

The program accepts all ages, from 0 to 70 years old. The music lessons are provided in community facilities or in the houses of the Roma people, and combine music practice of adults and children. Participants develop ideas about the contents of the lesson, which include suggestions for songs, rhythm, movement and lyrics improvisations, as well as conducting of music groups. The lessons provided to children aged 3 to 7 year old, include musical games, while the ones provided to children older than 7 years old, include lessons on the melodica.

Since 2015, there have been 68 educational meetings with 225 Roma people aged 0 – 70 years old, while two big concerts have been given in front of 1750 people. The members of the Roma families collaborated to develop performance skills in groups and repertoire including religious songs and multicultural music references. Children from opponent Roma groups participated together in musical games, conversed and helped each other in instrumental and group performances. Evaluation showed that the activities contributed to increase in attendance of English language lessons by Roma men, and also increase in use of local community services and attendance of festivities in the broader community of Luton by Roma families. Several similar programs have been held in several communities where minorities live under the risk of social exclusion.

### **Programs for immigrants and refugees**

Immigrants and refugees are considered a special population when processes of social inclusion are discussed, because of their differences in language, religion and culture compared to the local community. For this reason, the implementation of music/art educational programs that promote social inclusion, require more sensitive and well-adapted approaches.

The “Time to Play” program (Young & Street, 2009) was implemented in four cities in the UK, in childhood centers which were mostly serving Muslim families. The aim of the program was to investigate, through action research, the ways music and art activities can be used with these culturally different populations. Participants in the study gathered on a daily basis to discuss and share achievements, dilemmas and disappointments. Eighty-six structured interviews were conducted with immigrant mothers of young children, in order to develop an understanding of the views, practices and values that these mothers had concerning their children’s

education. The interviews focused on the cultural and religious values of these women concerning play and music, and their hopes and expectations that the mothers had from their children's participation in preschool education.

Several issues emerged from the program evaluation. One of them was the issue of language and communication with the parents. The need either for the use of non-verbal singing, movement activities and games, or the collaboration with a translator, was underlined. Another issue had to do with the limitations set by the religious ethics of these families concerning their participation in dance and singing activities that are generally linked with a more relaxed attitude. The need for sensitivity and adaptation of the programs offered depending on the peculiar characteristics of each ethnic/religious group of parents, emerged as the most important conclusion of this research endeavor.

The "Peep Learning Together Program" (PEEPLÉ) was a music education program based on a similar philosophy. PEEPLÉ was implemented in a childhood center for children under 4 years old and their mothers in a city in UK. The families originated from several countries and cultural groups in Europe, Asia and Africa (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Algeria, France, Poland, Albania, and India). Through singing in the native languages of the participants, and narration of personal stories, the program aimed at offering support to the young immigrant mothers for their children's learning, as well as helping them express their emotions and overcome their fears of living in an unfamiliar and often hostile environment. Case studies conducted in the context of the program, verified the importance of singing in the mother-child relationship and also as a group activity, which brings together families from different cultural and language environments, offering relief and joy.

### **Technology for social inclusion**

Of special interest are some music education software, which have been created to reinforce inclusion of socially vulnerable groups. The "Jamming Mobile Product" (JamMo) is a smartphone application, designed in the context of the UMSIC program (Usability of Music for Social Inclusion of Children) and funded by the European Union (UMSIC Final Project Report, 2011; Fredrikson et al., 2009). The application was created aiming at

the educational and social inclusion of all children, especially those who have moderate language or learning difficulties, or those who have recently immigrated to the host country. The application offers children 3 to 12 years of age, the opportunity to participate in playful singing activities and creative games of music performance and composition. Participation in the music activities can take place either as individual participation or collaboratively, in pairs of children, groups of peers in the classrooms or in the social media environments (Paananen & Myllykoski, 2011). The software can locate all appliances that are present and use it, and wirelessly connect directly with them (UMSIC Final Project Report, 2011).

In order to address the needs for social inclusion of children with language difficulties as well as immigrant children, the application was developed having specific characteristics that could address children's language and cultural needs (Paananen & Myllykoski, 2011). The instructions for use are offered in several languages, all in oral form and not in written text. The musical themes and other musical elements of the games have been chosen based on a multicultural perspective and include repertoire, musical styles, instruments and materials used in a variety of cultures.

The program was implemented in selected elementary schools, kindergarten and daycare centers in England, Finland and Germany (UMSIC Final Project Report, 2011). During the three years of implementation, eight field research studies and many action research studies were conducted, in which the sample summed up to 345 children, ages 3 to 11 years old. The research team was comprised by specialized music trainers, who collaborated intensively with graphic designers, software designers and developers, teachers, school directors, nursery staff, and professional psychologists. Data was derived through questionnaires, video observation, systematic observation inside the classrooms, focus groups and interviews.

The study evaluated the appropriateness of the developed software for the children's needs, interests and preferences as well as the difficulties they might have in the use of the application. In this context, children were invited to act as co-designers or co-researchers, and the data derived was used for the improvement and remake of the software (Fredrikson et al., 2011). The effectiveness of the program concerning its goals for educational and social inclusion of the participating children was also evaluated at a second phase (UMSIC Final Project Report, 2011). Data showed

that the children who participated in the program, felt more socially included than before, and the majority of them worked efficiently in pairs and exhibited willingness for collaboration and communication during the games. The increase in their communication and collaboration skills was also manifested through increase in behaviors such as children conversations, exchange of ideas and advice and expression of encouraging comments to each other.

## Epilogue

It is evident that community music programs can play a significant role in promoting social inclusion, cohesion, personal and social well-being of the participating people. Numerous programs (Welch et al., 2014) have also manifested the impact of music participation on well-being and inclusion. Research studies show positive effects of music programs for other populations, such the homeless (Bailey & Davidson, 2002), the elderly (Clift & Hancox, 2010), and the imprisoned (Henley et al., 2013). Some of the programs aiming at social inclusion have been initiatives of local organizations, while others have been policy initiatives at a national or international level. Several studies have reported on social capital and its generation and use in communities, and also in community music settings (Langston & Barrett, 2008), underlining shared norms and values, trust, community involvement, contact with families and friends as well as fellowship, as being key components fostering group cohesion. No matter of the origin or reasons for the above endeavors, whether research projects or hands-on programs, community music seems to positively affect the life of the community and its members. It is imperative that academic, research, and program efforts are combined to promote a large-scale exchange of best practices, design of programs, training of community music facilitators and implementation of such programs at a European level of social and educational policy. This is crucial if large-scale societal growth is to be sought, cultivating safety, sense of belonging and well-being in the members of the communities involved.



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